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THE WORKS OF THE AMERICAN ETCHERS.

XXI.—C. F. KIMBALL.



E are startled occasionally by phenomena which seem to have no cause. A display of skill, without a previous course of adequate training; a talent, the source of which is not apparent; a genius without development, springing up suddenly before us fully equipped, as Minerva sprang from the head of Jupiter,—these are enigmas which we cannot unravel. We try to get over the difficulty by an appeal to "natural ability"; but this expedient is simple self-delusion, as, instead of an explanation, it is merely a restatement of the problem in other words. The etcher to whom this notice is devoted is a genius of this kind. His whole *œuvre*, at this writing, consists of three plates:—

Lock at Windham, Me. Etched in 1880. Not signed.—Size of etched surface: Breadth, $5\frac{7}{8}$ "; height, $3\frac{3}{4}$ ".
Old Houses at Stroudwater. Signed: C. F. K. 80.—Etched surface: B. 6"; h. $3\frac{3}{8}$ ". Published herewith.
Mill-Dam near Stroudwater. Signed: C. F. K. 1881.—Etched surface: B. $3\frac{5}{8}$ "; h. $5\frac{1}{2}$ ".

The plate at the head of the list, although showing evidences of labor in overcoming technical difficulties, and somewhat exaggerated in contrasts of light and shade, is still so complete that many an etcher would be glad to score it as his first success after repeated trials and failures. The second plate, which is before the reader, seems the work of an old hand, whose assurance is the result of the most intimate familiarity with his tools and materials. Not only is it excellent in poetical sentiment and in artistic qualities,—skilful in composition and in concentration of effect and color,—but it is especially interesting from the straightforwardness of its treatment, the utter absence of all evidences of *trying*, and the resolute confidence of the *doing*. In the qualities of straightforwardness and simplicity the artist need not fear a comparison with some of the old Dutch landscape etchers,—and I say this with several of Waterloo's well-known little plates before me. If one would wish for a change, it would be for more delicacy in the sky. This defect is apparent also in the third plate, which, in spite of excellent qualities, is not as important as the two others.

C. F. Kimball was born in Monmouth, Me., in October, 1835, whence he was taken to Portland when he was about eight years old. He received some instruction in drawing and painting, while yet a boy, from C. O. Cole, a portrait painter then established in Portland. Circumstances, however, prevented him from devoting himself to painting at the time, and until very lately he pursued art only in such spare moments as could be snatched from other pursuits. Living far away from an art centre, working entirely from nature, and having had few opportunities of studying the works of others, he has been obliged to work out many things for himself, involving necessarily the spending, if not the wasting, of much valuable time. Mr. Kimball first exhibited out of Portland at the Spring Exhibition of the Boston Art Club of last year, where he showed two sketches, *Study of Trees*, and *Path to the Beach*, which gained favorable notice. In etching he has been interested for some years, but began the practice of it only last winter. He uses the old asphaltum ground, with warm Dutch mordant for biting, and occasionally works on the plate between the bitings. The plate which accompanies this notice was stopped out twice, thus giving three bitings, and there is no subsequent work upon it. It will be seen that Mr. Kimball's methods are as simple as his execution seems to be easy.

S. R. KOEHLER.

